

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1222

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 2017

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, JO, PLO, US, XF
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND THE PALESTINIANS

1. EVENING OF APRIL 6 IN CONVERSATION WITH COURT CHIEF SHARAF
WE EXPLORED IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED FURTHER TO BREAK CURRENT
DEADLOCK OVER GENEVA.

2. SHARAF EMPHASIZED THAT HE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY
TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF EXAMINING RECONVENING GENEVA IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE KIND OF SUBSTANTIVE SOLUTION OR OUTCOME WE BOTH
DESIRED ON THE WEST BANK. HERE HE SAID THAT JORDAN HAD ALWAYS
FAVORED SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS. IN THIS
CASE IT WOULD MEAN THAT JORDAN COULD SUPPORT A NEGOTIATION
WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE CARRYING OUT OF A REFERENDUM OR SOME
OTHER FAIR ACT OF SELF DETERMINATION IN THE WEST BANK AMONG
THE PALESTINIANS THERE. IF THE US COULD AGREE TO SUPPORT THAT
KIND OF END RESULT, HE FELT SURE THAT JORDAN COULD ALSO. HE
ALSO NOTED THAT WHILE THE ISRAELIS MIGHT NOT LIKE THAT KIND
OF A NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVE, IT WOULD BE HARD IN TERMS OF US
AND WORLD PUBLIC OPINION TO STAND AGAINST AN ACT OF SELF
DETERMINATION IN THE WEST BANK BY THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES.
HE FELT THAT TO BE FAIR, PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE GIVEN THE
GENERAL RIGHT TO RETURN TO THE WEST BANK TO TAKE PART IN
SELF-DETERMINATION PROCESS, ALTHOUGH ISRAEL

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AND JORDAN, THE TWO BORDERING STATES, COULD MAKE SURE THAT ANY
STRICTURES ABOUT DEMILITARIZATION AND NON-IMPORTATION OF ARMS,
AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES WERE INFORCED IN ORDER TO INSURE THAT
ARMED ORGANIZATIONS DID NOT UNFAIRLY INFLUENCE THE REFERENDUM
RESULTS.

3. SHARAF WENT ON TO INDICATE THAT THE RIGHT OF PALESTINIANS

TO RETURN TO THE WEST BANK SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RESTRICTED RIGHT OF SOME TO RETURN TO THEIR FORMER HOMES IN ISRAEL WITH OTHERS (THE VAST MAJORITY) TO RECEIVE COMPENSATION IN LIEU OF RETURN. HE ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT VERY FEW PALESTINIANS WOULD REALLY OP TO RETURN TO ISRAEL. HE NOTED IN ADDITION THAT IN THE WEST BANK THE LOCAL POPULATION WOULD VERY QUICKLY COALESCE AND ATTEMPT TO RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS TO THE EXCLUSION OF RETURNEES. IN THIS CONNECTION HE THOUGHT THAT IF AN ELECTION WERE REALLY FREE, THE WEST BANKERS WOULD VOTE FIRST TO ENSURE THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELIS AND SECONDLY TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT STATE. AFTER THEY HAD SET UP SUCH A STATE, THEY MIGHT THEN BEGIN TO WORK OUT THEIR RELATIONS WITH JORDAN, BUT ONLY AFTER FULL ISRAELI EVACUATION AND THE SETTING UP OF THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT STATE. (COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE HEARD A LEADING MEMBER OF THE JORDANIAN ESTABLISHMENT TALK SO FRANKLY ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE WEST BANKERS WOULD WANT THEIR OWN STATE FIRST, NOT TIES WITH JORDAN). OVER TIME SHARAF SAID HE THOUGHT THE WEST BANKERS WOULD COME DOWN IN FAVOR OF A UNION WITH JORDAN RATHER THAN MERELY AN ASSOCIATION. BUT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED AFTER WEST BANK STATEHOOD. HE DID NOT DEFINE CLEARLY, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UNION AND ASSOCIATION, BUT DID EMPHASIZE HIS BELIEF THAT WEST BANKERS WOULD TRUST AND WANT HUSSEIN AS HEAD OF STATE.

4. I ASKED SHARAF ABOUT WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT LINKS WITH JORDAN COULD COME OR BE DEFINED IN ADVANCE OF FULL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, SINCE THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE CLOSER TO WHAT ISRAELIS MIGHT DESIRE IF THEY EVER AGREED TO A WITHDRAWAL. HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT "PLO COULD BE SO CRUDELY FINESSED". HE

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POINTED OUT THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF SOME UNIFIED ARAB ACCEPTANCE OF THE "SELF-DETERMINATION APPROACH", IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE MAJOR ARAB LEADERS SUCH AS SADAT AND ASSAD TO IN EFFECT DUMP PLO AND PROCEED ON WITH NEGOTIATIONS IN ABSENCE OF PLO AT GENEVA, WHATEVER MIGHT BE THE NATURE OF THE CONTINUING DISPUTES OVER MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND NON-RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND OVER 242 AND 338. IN ADDITION, UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS OF STALEMATE, NONE OF THE ARABS, AND LEAST OF ALL JORDAN, WOULD STICK ITS NECK OUT AND TRY TO GET SOME SORT OF A SOLUTION GOING WHICH DISPOSED OF THE PLO, ESPECIALLY IN THE ABSENCE OF A LEAD FROM THE UNITED STATES.

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5. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, AS HE THOUGHT ABOUT THE SELF-DETERMINATION OPTION, THAT IF THE US REALLY CAME OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF SUCH AN APPROACH AND WERE WILLING IN EFFECT TO PUSH IT WITH THE OTHER ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS, THEN HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IN SUCH CASE THE PLO MIGHT WELL BOW TO THE INEVITABLE, AVOIDING A MASSIVE INTERNAL DISPUTE IN THE BARGAIN, AND WORK OUT WITH THE OTHER ARABS A FORMULA FOR EGYPT, SYRIAN AND JORDAN TO NEGOTIATE ON ITS BEHALF FOR THIS TYPE OF A SOLUTION. SHARAF ADMITTED THE PLO WOULD NOT LIKE THIS KIND OF OPTION. AFTER ALL AT RABAT IT THOUGHT THAT IT HAD SO ARRANGED THINGS THAT IT WAS ASSURED THE SEAT OF POWER IN ANY PALESTINIAN STATE THAT MIGHT EMERGE. HE ADDED THAT JORDAN HAD NOT WILLINGLY ACCEPTED RABAT. RABAT HAD BEEN PUSHED ON JORDAN. NEVERTHELESS JORDAN HAD ALWAYS STOOD STRONGLY FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SUPPORT SUCH A SOLUTION, EVEN IF IT COULD NOT BE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF THE FINAL RESULTS. I ASKED HOW THE WEST BANK MIGHT BE GOVERNED AND REFERENDUM SET UP AFTER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IF SUCH COULD BE NEGOTIATED. HE SAID THAT IT COULD BE DONE INTERNATIONALLY; IT SHOULD NOT BE JORDAN'S ROLE. HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT MORE SPECIFIC ON WHO MIGHT DO THIS.

6. SHARAF ADDED THAT A PROCEDURAL MOVE IN THIS AREA WAS SOMETHING THE US WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE LEAD ON. THE ARABS WOULD NOT MOVE ON IT THEMSELVES WITHOUT US PUSHING. THE US WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE ARAB LEADERS EITHER THAT NOT ONLY COULD THE PLO

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NOT BE ACCOMODATED AT GENEVA AND STILL GET THE ISRAELIS THERE, OR THAT POSSIBLY SUCH AN EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE US WOULD COST THE ARABS ENORMOUSLY IN TERMS OF OTHER THINGS THEY WANTED FROM THE ISRAELIS WITH US HELP, I.E. TERRITORY. BUT THE ARABS WOULD THEN HAVE TO KNOW THAT THE US WOULD BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT AND WORK FOR THE PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION OPTION. JORDAN WOULD DO ALL IT COULD TO HELP OBTAIN THIS IF THAT IS WHAT THE US WANTED

TO DO. THE KEY TO SUCCESS WOULD BE CONVINCING SADAT, ASSAD AND FAHD THAT SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD WORK. THEY IN TURN WOULD HAVE TO TAKE ON THE PLO. SHARAF THOUGHT THE OTHER ARABS, INCLUDING JORDAN, COULD THEN HANDLE THE NEGOTIATIONS STAYING IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE PLO WHICH WOULD NOT ATTEND GENEVA. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, SHARAF SAID, NEITHER THE PLO NOR ISRAEL WOULD LIKE THIS KIND OF AN APPROACH, BECAUSE NEITHER COULD BE SURE OF THE OUTCOME ON THE WEST BANK, BUT IT HAD THE ADVANTAGES OF LETTING THE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS AND RETURNEES DECIDE PEACEFULLY FOR THEMSELVES WHAT THEY WANTED, FREE OF ARMED PLO INFLUENCE, REMOVING IN THE PROCESS PLO IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, AND IT EMPLOYED THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION WHICH FEW COULD STAND AGAINST PUBLICLY.

7. SHARAF TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION WITH ME FURTHER NEXT WEEK SINCE WE WERE INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT IN OUR TALK BY THE ARRIVAL OF OTHER GUESTS AT HIS HOUSE.
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